

**SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION**

**Flandreau School District
Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2001-2002**

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This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by the Office of Special Education. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

Promising Practice	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
Maintenance	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
Needs Improvement	The district/agency has met this requirement but has identified areas of weakness that left unaddressed may result in non-compliance.
Out of Compliance	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement.
Not applicable	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

Principle 1 – General Supervision
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General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Comprehensive plan
- ? Budgeted services and information
- ? District screening information
- ? Surveys
- ? District inservice training records and plan

- ? Personnel information
- ? Student file reviews
- ? Enrollment data
- ? Former monitoring results
- ? Placement alternative data
- ? Placement data by age
- ? Exit information
- ? Child count information
- ? Parental rights
- ? Graduation rates
- ? Assessment participation data
- ? Suspension/expulsion data
- ? NCA standards and report

Promising Practice

The steering committee identified personnel development as an area of promising practice for the district. It is felt that staff is well trained in working with students with disabilities.

Maintenance

The steering committee concluded that the child find activities and referral procedures are effective in meeting the intent of requirements and the needs of the district. Special education services are also offered to home school children within the district. The steering committee determined procedures are in place insuring that students voluntarily enrolled in private schools and placed in out of district settings are provided appropriate educational benefits. The steering committee concluded that the district is meeting the intent of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in respect to affording parents all of their due process rights, implementing performance testing to check for child progress, and the provision of services and appropriate programs from certified staff.

Needs Improvement

The steering committee identified that staff need more training in the referral process as an area of needed improvement for the district. They identified that more time is needed in the area of student assessment and planning. The committee also identified the need to better include parents in training and advisory groups, the need to sponsor necessary trainings in the evenings, the need to work with community health organizations to put on parent workshops, and greater family involvement in child find activities as other areas of needed improvement for the district.

Validation Results

Promising Practices

The steering committee identified that the Flandreau Public Schools has promising practices in their preschool program with respect to the screening and child find method that is used by the district. The review team was able to observe the district child find/screening in progress and validate this practice as an innovative way to utilize many community resources and bring in as many children and families as possible. The district screening included birth to age 3 screening, so parents could bring in all of the young children at the same time. Headstart and community health agencies were in attendance with their programs to offer any needed assistance. The district had also applied for a Title 9 grant that was used to purchase “readiness packets” for parents of 3 and 4-year-olds. These readiness packets included assorted Kindergarten readiness workbooks, crayons, pencils, and suggested activities to be facilitated by the parents. Finally, the district was very proactive in bringing as many families and children as possible in for the screening. Telephone calls were made to many families that did not make appointments in order

to give them an additional chance to attend the screening. The data kept from last year's screening showed that 47 children of Kindergarten age attended the screening and 44 were enrolled this last fall for Kindergarten.

Maintenance

The review team agrees with the conclusions of the self-assessment and finds the district is functioning at a maintenance level regarding the requirements for general supervision, with the exception of their child find procedures which were found to be a promising practice.

Areas that need improvement

The review team agreed with all areas identified by the steering committee as needing improvement, and also added the need for more training of regular education staff concerning students with disabilities. The review team found that the professional training provided by the district to special education staff is more than adequate, but general education staff does not have the same opportunities for this training. For example, most general educators interviewed would like additional training concerning appropriate modifications and/or accommodations to be made in the classroom. The district could include general education staff in their training opportunities in the future.

Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3rd birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Student file reviews
- ? Surveys
- ? Comprehensive plan
- ? Parents rights document
- ? Placement data
- ? Preschool information sheets
- ? Personnel training information
- ? Suspension/expulsion data

Maintenance

The committee concluded that all children are guaranteed a free and appropriate public education. The district has policies and procedures in place to assure that if a student with disabilities is suspended or expelled, the students will still receive a free and appropriate public education. The district will also continue to report all suspended/expelled students in order to track this information. The committee concluded that staff has the skills to develop and implement behavior improvement plans when necessary. The committee also concluded that the district is meeting the needs of the children through annual reviews, services, provided, child find activities, and child count accountability.

Areas that need improvement

The committee identified that the district needs to continue to collect feedback from parents, current students, former students, and staff regarding the delivery of services to children with disabilities to evaluate, modify and develop appropriate programs.

Validation Results**Maintenance**

The review team agreed with the conclusions of the self-assessment and finds the district is functioning at a maintenance level regarding the requirements for a free and appropriate public education for children with disabilities. The review team also noted that behavior plans, including positive behavior supports, were well written and utilized throughout the district.

Areas that need improvement

The review team agrees with all areas identified by the steering committee, and notes one additional area of concern in the provision of a free and appropriate public education at the high school level. The teacher at the high school level has 27 students on her caseload with no consistent assistance from another teacher and/or a paraprofessional. Through student file reviews and interviews of both the special educator and the general educators at the high school level, the review team questions whether these students are receiving all of the assistance necessary, or simply the minimum because of the time constraints for this teacher.

Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Student file reviews
- ? Surveys
- ? Comprehensive plan
- ? Personnel training information
- ? Statewide assessment participation data

Promising Practices

The self-assessment committee concluded that the Flandreau School District is using performance standards to assist in determining student achievement and progress with content standards. The use of performance indicators will clarify and provide a rubric with special education and regular education children as far as the learning students are accomplishing measured against a common understanding for staff, parents, and students themselves. In addition, continued use of regular educators in the evaluation processes will provide important links to the regular education environment on behalf of the child and parent.

Maintenance

The committee concluded that the Flandreau School District is maintaining compliance in all of the areas of appropriate evaluation. The system structures, supports, and procedures are in place to insure that the child and family outcomes are positive in the aspect of evaluation and reevaluation. Personnel issues, as a result of staff development which is a priority in the district, demonstrate that staff are appropriately trained and given considerable opportunity to acquire, hone skills, and maximize understandings of needed special education information to insure compliance and exemplary practice in the aspects of evaluation. The district focus in the areas of math and reading instruction particularly enhance placement and eligibility determined on disability rather than lack of appropriate instruction in the learning environment. Further, expertise beyond our district is sought in cases where specialization or outside assistance is needed. Practices show attention to detail regarding informed consent, notice, and copies of information given to parents and guardians that allow their valid participation in the timely processes of comprehensive evaluation. Team processes insure multidisciplinary and multi-faceted approaches to child eligibility determination and placement according to appropriate categories for appropriate reasons.

Validation Results

Promising Practices

The self-assessment committee identified as a promising practice that the Flandreau School District is using performance standards to assist in determining student achievement and progress with content standards. This practice has just recently started in the Flandreau School District, and has the potential to be a promising practice, but there is not enough evidence at this time to validate this as a promising practice.

Areas that need improvement

The review team identified a number of areas in appropriate evaluation as needing improvement. Parental input must be gathered in the evaluation process, and although the district is aware of this requirement, the practice of gathering parental input prior to student evaluations is just beginning. At this point in time, the special educators are starting to use a “referral /review/reevaluation form” to obtain parental input, but this form contains no indication of the date information was gathered, nor parental or team signatures for documentation purposes. The 25-day evaluation timeline was exceeded for a student that was placed out of district, and, due to an older form, the district was not documenting that parents received a copy of the evaluation results.

Areas out of compliance

24:05:25:04. Evaluation procedures.

A variety of assessment tools and strategies must be used to gather relevant functional and development information about the child, including information provided by the parents, that assists the team in determining whether the child is a child with a disability; and the content of the child's IEP. The monitoring team validated, through file review and staff interviews, that functional assessment was not being utilized for program development of the IEP. In all files reviewed, no documentation of functional assessment was found. Staff did not understand this information was to be used for determining specific skills areas affected by the student's disability, the student's present levels of performance, their progress in the general curriculum or development of measurable annual goals and short term instructional objectives.

Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Comprehensive plan
- ? Parental rights document
- ? Consent and prior notice forms
- ? Parent and student surveys
- ? Student file reviews
- ? District policy manual

Maintenance

The committee concluded that the district is demonstrating compliance in all areas of procedural safeguards and needs to continue to maintain in these areas. This includes the transfer of rights to adult students, content of parental rights, informed parental consent, prior written notice to parents, confidentiality and access to records, and complaint and due process hearing procedures.

Validation Results

Maintenance

The review team agrees with the conclusions of the self-assessment and finds the district is functioning at a maintenance level regarding the requirement for procedural safeguards.

Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Comprehensive plan
- ? Personnel training records
- ? Surveys
- ? Student file reviews

Maintenance

The steering committee concluded that the district has policies and procedures in place and is maintaining compliance in regards to the IEP team and the IEP process.

Areas that need improvement

The steering committee concluded that the district needs to improve in the area of secondary transition planning, collaboration, and overall IEP content.

Validation Results

Areas that need improvement

The review team agrees that the district has policies and procedures in place in regards to the IEP team and the IEP process, however, improvement is needed regarding the following areas. The team noted during student file reviews that the administrator or designee was not present at two IEP meetings that were held, and the 365-day annual review timeline was exceeded for two students.

The required content for an individual education program is another area of needed improvement. The amount of services to be provided must be stated in the IEP, so that the level of the agency's commitment of resources will be clear to parents and other IEP team members. During file reviews, the team found that “as needed” was used to describe the frequency of modifications needed on 12 of 31 IEPs reviewed. Annual goals must describe a skill to accomplish and must be measurable. In 10 files reviewed, the annual goals were not measurable goals that described a specific skill, but rather simply referred to the short-term objectives. For example, “Student will improve math skills by mastering 80% of the following objectives”.

The steering committee also concluded that the district needs to improve in the area of secondary transition, and the review team agrees with this conclusion. Transition services must be a coordinated set of activities for a student, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes movement from school to postsecondary activities. The services provided could include preparation for postsecondary education, vocational training, integrated employment (including supported employment), continuing and adult education, adult services, independent living, or community participation. The coordinated set of activities must be based on the individual student's needs, taking into account the student's preferences and interests, and shall include instruction, related services, community experiences, the development of employment and other postsecondary adult living objectives, and, if appropriate, acquisition of daily living skills and functional vocational evaluation.

During file reviews and interviews conducted, it was found that although students of transition age were assessed in the area of transition, and transition services were planned, the transition services provided were minimal and based more upon regulations than individual needs, strengths, and interests. The team also saw very little documentation concerning the used of community resources and collaboration with outside agencies for transition services.

Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary

Data sources used:

- ? Comprehensive plan
- ? Surveys
- ? Student file reviews
- ? Staff training records
- ? Age/placement data
- ? Disability/placement data

Promising practices

The steering committee concluded that the Flandreau Public School has promising practices the their preschool program. The school has outstanding collaboration with the local preschools and early childhood organizations. Their screening child find is well attended with all parts of the community taking part to ensure the child find process is complete.

Maintenance

The district has policies and procedures in place to support a continuum of least restrictive environment and students are placed in the general education classroom for the maximum amount of instructional time appropriate. The special education staff has been trained to implement behavioral intervention plans and behavioral planning has been implemented with consistency throughout the district this year.

Students' placement decisions are given appropriate percentages of consideration with harmful effects being minimized and education with their peers maximized. Students have the opportunity to participate in extra curricular activities with their peers. Modified general education curriculum instructional materials are available to teachers to use in the general education program. The percentage of students placed out of district is higher than the state's percentage, but it is the least restrictive environment for the students so placed.

Areas that need improvement

The committee concluded that behavioral intervention plans are in the initial stage of implementation and may need improvement.

Validation Results

Areas out of compliance

24:05:28:01. Least restrictive program to be provided.

24:05:28:02. Continuum of alternative placements.

Although the steering committee identified their preschool as having promising practices under the principle of least restrictive environment, the review team found this to be an area that is out of compliance. There is verbal collaboration with local daycares and a private preschool concerning the services provided, however it was determined through file review and interview that the majority of services provided to preschool children took place in the early childhood special education setting, with the exception of a few speech services. Of 14 preschool files reviewed, 13 children were served in the early childhood special education setting. In interview with the early childhood special educator, it became clear that she was unsure about the requirements for least restrictive environment. For example, on the page in the IEP that addresses least restrictive environment, the location of the special education services was not recorded correctly. Rather, what was recorded was the child's whole day in addition to the special education services. For example, if a child received services only during the preschool session, but also attended a daycare, the least restrictive environment page reflected that the child was in a regular education/early childhood special education setting even though no services were ever provided in a regular setting.